

Approved

**Town of Brentwood
Budget Committee**
Minutes of January 19, 2015

Present: Elyse Seeley (Chair), Bill Faria, John Lyon, Dianne Vosgien, (School Board Rep), Malcolm Allison, Krista Steger, Jeff Bryan (Selectmen Rep), Barbara Zvodar.

Visitors: Lisa Swasey, Ron Kew (Swasey School Principal), Melissa Litchfield, Ken Christiansen, Jessie Hollister, Michael Morgan, Kim Woods

Chairperson Elyse Seeley called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

1. Motion to approve draft minutes from January 12, Dianne/Malcolm, Approved, as corrected 7-0.
2. A discussion and understanding regarding the valuation of the town properties down by 3%. What this means is that the taxpayers paid 3% less than the state believes should have been paid due to the undervaluation of properties through the town (required by State to be at 100%). Tax increases may be forthcoming.
3. Elyse noted there was a clerical error on the latest budget figures we have received ref: Conservation Commission, number should be \$8665.00 and not \$9665.00. Jeff noted that was the correct number (\$8665.00) and was also approved at the last BOS meeting.

BUDGETS FOR CONSIDERATION:

1. **Library – 4550-49- :** Motion to reopen/discuss, Krista/Malcolm. Approved, 7-0. Krista noted that health benefits are up nearly \$7000.00. Jeff pointed out this was due to one change from part time to full time and subsequent benefits. The library is open 39 hours per week, 135 staff hours or 3.6 staff per hour (plus volunteers). The increase is nearly all salary and benefits. Jeff pointed out that the membership is up (more library cards are being provided), the library is expanding services, and it is the New Hampshire Library of the year. Elyse invited the library to attend but they decided to go forward with the budget they proposed. Staffing is an issue, as with all the other departments and the school. The actual cost number for library for 2014 was \$221, 682.00 and they came in over budget. Motion, to approve \$225,000.00 for the Library line, a 2.69% increase, Krista/Dianne. The difference is \$14,455.00 less than requested. Approved for \$225,000.00, 5-2.
2. **Highway – 4312- 21:** Motion to reopen, Krista/Malcolm, approved, 5-2. Krista believes the surplus is very large. Although there was not a lot of snow, we are halfway through the season and the total Public Works surplus is \$85,000.00. Sand/salt/cold patch request is up \$10,000.00. Jeff advised there has been a large increase in price of salt. We are unable to pre-buy so the cost has gone up. We are hiring a full year part-time person, and last year we could not get a new employee, thus the reduction in actuals. We believe we have a new hire, budgeted for approx. \$30,000.00. Motion to approve highway, \$283,642.00, Malcolm/Barb, approved, 5-3. This is a difference of \$22,454 over requested amount. No changes to the snow/ice budget line. (Note: We will invite Wayne to attend next meeting if he would like to discuss).

3. **Town OB Summary** There was a discussion of the overall Recommended town budgets, which include differences from BOS approved budgets as follows:

- Fire reduced by \$22,955.00
- Highway reduced by \$22,454.00
- Library reduced by \$14,455.00

Corrections to town budgets include:

- Conservation Commission correction -\$1,000.00
- Police Department correction - \$1,194.00
- New addition for Mosquito Control up +\$30,500.00

This results in a total BudCom Recommended Town Operating Budget of \$3,128,180, an increase of 2.7% over last years operating budget (up \$81,254) and a difference of \$ 59,864 from the BOS approved budget of \$3,188,044. The tax impact of this OB will be approximately \$.157 cents per thousand of assessed value. Motion to approve the BudCom Total Recommended Operating Budget, in the amount of \$3,128,180.00. Barb/Dianne, approved, 5-3.

There will be two different budgets put forward at Town Meeting for voter approval.

Town Warrants Articles:

BOS approved adding Mosquito Control as a line item in the operating budget. This has been a warrant article for the past three years but will not be presented as a warrant article going forward. It appears that warrant articles will be less than last year. BOS has approved the following warrant articles for our recommendation:

1. **CASA** added to regional association WA for the first year (Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children): Motion to approve in the amount of \$500.00, Jeff/Dianne, approved, 8-0
2. **Trustees of the Trust Fund**; To pay fees from Capital Reserve Fund for CR investment. No vote taken as this does not involve appropriation.
3. **Repair of Town Bridges**: Motion to approve adding \$50,000.00, Jeff/Barb, approved, 8-0.
4. **Road Repairs**: Motion to approve adding \$250,000.00, Dianne/Jeff, approved, 8-0.
5. **Highway Vehicles and Equipment**: Motion to approve adding \$31, 477.00, Jeff/Dianne, approved , 8-0. (Note this is the difference in the balance due on a lease purchase for a backhoe)
6. **Highway Buildings**: Motion to approve adding \$50,000.00, Dianne/Barb, approved, 8-0. (Note this is a combination capital reserve for highway building and salt storage shed)

7. **Backhoe:** Motion to approve payment of \$18,524.00, third year payment of lease purchase agreement, Jeff/Dianne, approved 8-0.

Mosquito Control – 4299 -24: Motion to approve \$30,500.00, Jeff/Dianne, approved, 7-0. This is a new line item which will be added to Government in the overall Town Operating Budget.

Jeff indicated that there may be one additional WA from the Fire Department for a new vehicle.

SCHOOL OPERATING BUDGET

Motion to discuss Swasey School operating budget, Jeff/Krista, approved, 7-0.

Malcolm calculates average cost per pupil based on proposed budget (divided by 329 K-5 students) would be \$16,318. Applying State formula cost per pupil (\$13,291) times the number of students (329), calculates the appropriate budget at \$4,300,000.00. Malcolm provided a breakdown from 2007/08:

Year	Cost per pupil	Number of students
2007/08	\$12,080.00	411
2008/09	\$13,261.00	410
2009/10	\$13,347.00	381
2009/10	\$14,169.00	385
2010/11	\$14,067.00	357
2011/12	\$15,269.00	365
2012/13	\$16,580.00	339
2013/14	\$16,318.00	329

Bill did a similar calculation with inflation rates from 2008 to present, budget comes out at \$5,661,262.00. This is using operating budgets X inflation rates (approximately 10% overall). Discussion re: consideration of other factors like special education costs, etc.

Motion, Malcolm/Barb, in the amount of \$4, 362,000.00, 20% reduction from the proposed operating budget. Dianne noted that actuals from last year were \$5,0001,000.00, Not approved, 5-2-1 abstention.

John offered a motion of an \$850 K reduction, John/Malcolm. Understanding personally special education needs, he knows in other districts there is a greater ratio of students assigned to each teacher than here in Brentwood. We have discussed the number of teachers in the school for the amount of students, the number of aides is too high, a curriculum coordinator is not needed on a full time basis. Elyse did a calculation and an \$850K reduction is \$4, 518,627.00, the budget number from when we had about 391 students. John stated further that you have classrooms with 14 students with a teacher and aide. Dianne stated the numbers of aides, and special ed teachers are driven by IEPs. Elyse stated that IEPs are written by staff so shared aides is a possibility, grouping can be done in many cases. The assistant principal was put in

place when we had over 400 students and we are well below that with a second administrator. Extra staffing (PE, nursing, f/t Psych) should be reduced as enrollment is reduced, not retention of staffing for 400 plus students. Last year \$35,000.00 was spent from surplus for non-emergency items; there wasn't a savings of a ½ teacher's salary that we expected, another \$45,000.00. This year, in 2014 there was approval for \$31,600.00 for sabbatical costs, not including an annual salary and \$24,000.00 offered in bonuses. The acting principal (Curriculum Coordinator) was paid an additional stipend of \$200.00 a day, the extra administrator. Elyse said she's not sure that there is an understanding that this is taxpayer money. The question of where the \$24,000.00 in bonuses was going to come from was never answered. We are being told how tight things are and then in the minutes dollars are spent on a lot of extra things that were not budgeted, and are after-thoughts. Jeff brought up a \$100,000.00 that was spent on a playground, when a playground (built by volunteers and donations) was already there. Dianne responded that back in 2008/09, we had an AP, two curriculum coordinators, 1.7 guidance, psychology, we had more staffing and 27 aides.

John inquired, what would happen if the coordinator disappeared; would education go on? Dianne stated not in year one, maybe not in year two, but in year three or four, as you are cutting down on services and cut down on the assistance the teachers are getting, yes it is going to deteriorate. John responded that these are experienced teachers who should be able to handle it. If they were younger inexperienced teachers that might need more support but not with the staff we have in the school. Dianne stated that with teaching many things have changed and we need someone to keep everyone on the same track. She believes the staffing is very relevant in terms of programs and curriculum and because we are one school but we are part of an SAU and these children filter into the junior high school. So we want to be sure these children are all on the same page when they do move on to the Coop.

Bill noted we do have a lot of experienced teachers and that will change down the road. Although we have cut the town budget it is still up. We asked the school to take a good hard look at the school budget, to come in under what they did last year, they were overstaffed and we asked them to take a look and to try to reduce staff they did that, the school budget is down 1.6%. The cost of students is fluctuating and we heard from Malcolm about those numbers. I think that is a lot of money being spent there that needs to be looked at in a good hard way. We are not in a position to go line by line, but the budget needs to be cut, I think a million is a lot, \$850,000 is a lot, I think maybe something less than that is probably a good idea. I do not have a number in mind but I think that is a huge number for the school to take that big a hit. Elyse pointed out that the recommended size for classrooms is much higher than current at the school, and a larger number of students in the past had no negative impact on the quality of education.

Vote on \$4,518,627.00, not approved, 4-4.

Dianne made a motion to approve the proposed budget of \$5,368,627.00, second by Krista, not approved, 4-3-1.

Krista/Dianne, motion to approve \$5,300,000.00, failed, 4-4.

Jeff/Dianne, motion to approve \$5,268,627.00, failed, 4-4

Jeff/Bill, motion to approve \$5,200,00.00, failed, 6-2.

Chair observed we are at an impasse at this point at 8:45 PM, and asked to table this budget until our next meeting to give everyone time to reconsider.

Public Comment:

Ron Kew: please consider that there is a lot of work that goes into this process by all involved. If you cut too much of this budget the quality of education will suffer. The town and taxes are needed but not at the expense of the school which is a very important component in the school.

Mike Morgan: hopes the committee can be responsive to home values, and that to keep them steady or rising, the school is an important part of that process. Noted demographer, Peter Franchise, notes that communities tend to squeeze families with kids out and it should be the opposite to keep our communities vibrant and growing. These will be our future leaders. Also, the costs per student numbers do not include all of the needs of the school, like food service, debt service etc. Also, having a good school keeps values in town up, a large cut could be devastating to the school and town.

Jessie Hollister stated, that as a parent and a taxpayer a 1 million dollar cut would be devastating and irresponsible of the Budcom. It is important to educate our kids in the best way we possibly can.

8:54 pm, Motion to adjourn, Barb/Dianne, approved 7-0

Minutes respectfully submitted by William C Faria